

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

6.00 P.M.

21ST DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT:- Councillors June Ashworth (Chairman), Caroline Jackson (Vice-Chairman), Rob Devey, Roger Mace and David Whitaker

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Eileen Blamire – Leader of the Council

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillors Alan Biddulph, Brett Cooper and Phillippa Williamson

Officers in attendance:-

Susan Parsonage
Stephen Metcalfe
Jenny Kay

Chief Executive
Principal Democratic Support Officer
Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer

29 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2016 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

30 DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Eileen Blamire, Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to the meeting.

Councillor Blamire discussed a number of issues with the Committee regarding the Government's Autumn Settlement and changes to the homes bonus which had been reduced to compensate for extra funding for social care. Funding was reducing year on year with the 2020/21 forecast being bleak.

Members asked a number of questions relating to Brexit and European funding. It was agreed that information on European funding be circulated to the Committee.

The Leader of the Council was requested to consider any issues that Scrutiny could engage with. It was suggested that the Committee might want to investigate issues relating to gambling establishments on the high street in the future.

The Committee went on to discuss PCSOs, CCTV, the Combined Authority and the tunnel under the Bay from Barrow to Heysham to transfer electricity.

Members went on to discuss the Pre-Scrutiny process and if it could prevent Call-ins of Cabinet decisions if Scrutiny was involved at an earlier stage.

A concern was raised over letters that were sent out from the Council and the language used in letters that could be perceived as officious and unfriendly. It was suggest that the

District Wide Tenants Forum could be requested to look at sample correspondence and how this could be improved.

Questions were asked about performance management including staff development, objectives and training.

Resolved:-

That Councillor Blamire be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.

31 SCOPING OF TASK GROUP

The Committee was requested to consider the scoping of a potential Task Group to investigate the commissioning of Voluntary and Faith Sector organisations.

That, subject to Officer support including the Chief Officer (Health and Housing), the scoping document be agreed and that an informal Task Group be established to consider Voluntary Community and Faith Sector Commissioning on an informal basis to allow Members with an interest to take part in the piece of work.

Resolved:-

That, subject to Officer support including the Chief Officer (Health and Housing), the scoping document be agreed and that an informal Task Group be established to consider Voluntary Community and Faith Sector Commissioning on an informal basis to allow Members with an interest to take part in the piece of work.

32 LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman advised Members that they had recently viewed a Lancashire County Council's Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting.

It was felt that the format of the meeting was too formal and would not be fit for purpose for Lancaster City Council.

Members discussed how the City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee fed into Cabinet meetings and it was suggested that it would be sensible for the Committee to meet prior to Cabinet meetings.

It was agreed to recommend to the Council Business Committee that Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings be timetabled for the Wednesday prior to Cabinet meetings in the Timetable for 2017/18. It was further agreed that an item be added to the Committee's agenda to consider the Cabinet agenda.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Council Business Committee that Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings be timetabled for the Wednesday prior to Cabinet meetings in the timetable for 2017/18.

(2) That an item be added to the Committee's agenda to consider the Cabinet agenda.

33 CONSIDERATION OF ANY REQUESTS FOR COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCESS)

It was noted that there had not been any requests for items to be considered in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action process.

34 CONSIDERATION OF ANY PETITIONS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCESS)

It was noted that there had not been any requests for items to be considered in the accordance with the Consideration of Petitions process.

35 LOCALITY WORKING

Members were advised that an update had been requested on locality working from Lancashire County Council.

Resolved:-

That the update be noted.

36 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme.

It was reported that the Budget and Performance Panel had agreed to refer the Customer Services Strategy and any future Complaints Policy to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. It was agreed to add this to the Committee's Work.

The Committee was informed that the Budget and Performance Panel had also agreed to invite the Committee to its meeting when the Repairs and Maintenance Service was to be considered.

Members were advised that a suggestion had been made that the Committee re-consider the recommendations of the Civic Task Group that had undertaken a review of Civic and Ceremonial issues a number of years ago. It was reported that Alderman felt that they were not involved with the Council and would like to be more involved. It had been suggested that Civic awards could be introduced at little cost to encourage civic pride in the district and that Aldermen could be involved in this process.

It was agreed that the recommendations of the Civic Task Group be reconsidered by a group of interest Members who would report back to the Committee and that the final report of the Task Group be circulated to the Committee.

Resolved:-

(1) That the Customer Services Strategy and any future Complaints Policy be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

- (2) That the recommendations of the Civic Task Group be reconsidered by a group of interest Members who would in turn report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (3) That the final report of the Civic Task Group be circulated to the Committee.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.53 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Jenny Kay, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582065
or email jkay@lancaster.gov.uk**